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SECRETARY OF THE STATE
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- STATEMENT -

BYSIEWICZ CELEBRATES OFFICIAL KICKOFF OF CITIZENS ELECTION FUND PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING FOR 2008

(HARTFORD) – Connecticut Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz issued the following statement to celebrate the official launch of the Citizens' Election Fund public financing for the 2008 legislative elections in Connecticut. Candidates who raise qualifying contributions are eligible for \$25,000 for a House race and \$85,000 for a Senate race. Secretary Bysiewicz, Connecticut's top elections official and a longtime advocate for clean government, said:

"I am so proud to join with my fellow public officials and advocates who helped turn the idea of public campaign financing in Connecticut into a reality. Today is a great day and we deserve to celebrate.

Those of us who have been around state government long enough remember the early battles of campaign finance reform. I have been fighting to try and limit the influence of money in politics for at least 16 years in this state. When I was the house chair of the Government, Administration and Elections Committee, we got it out of committee but sometimes couldn't even get a vote on the floor of the house. But we kept up the good fight. And I have to say thank you to Governor Rell for also joining this cause. On many things we disagree but on the issue of integrity in government and our political process we are on the same page.

Unfortunately, it took the worst corruption scandal in our state's history – years of illegal payments by campaign contributors and contract steering during the Rowland Administration – for our political leaders to see the light. The only way to have truly clean elections is to provide public financing. This removes the need to solicit donations

from lobbyists or state contractors who often want something in return for their contributions.

Instead, rather than raising money our candidates for state office can spend time talking about the issues of most importance to the voters – education, energy prices, the environment, public safety, and more.

The candidates now have to have grass roots support – know their constituents – enough to qualify for public funds if they opt in.

And we've seen a revolution this year in the power of small contributions that is a real eye opener. Activists on both sides of the aisle have marveled at the Obama for President's fundraising operations. The Obama campaign to date has shattered previous fundraising records by taking in more than \$226 million. But more amazing than that, they did it with an army of 1.5 million donors and 90% of these donors have contributed \$100 or less!

I am very proud of the strong showing of those running for office already opting into public financing. The Elections enforcement commission estimates that between 70% and 80% of candidates for state office will participate in public financing in its first cycle in Connecticut. Those are truly historic numbers, especially when you consider that in other states with public financing, Maine and Arizona, for example, their participation rate in the first year was only 30%

I disagree with those who say public financing won't encourage more people to get involved in the political process. As some have said, this is a brand new way to raise money for political campaigns, it typically takes a couple of election cycles for those interested in running for office to understand how it works.

A federal survey a few years ago reported that Maine and Arizona both experienced significant increases in the amount of candidates contesting races in both primary and general elections – once they were a couple of cycles into public financing. Voter participation rates in these two states have both risen about 10% since public financing enacted. I think those numbers can be duplicated right here in Connecticut.

I can tell you that since last November my office has reported a record number of people registering to vote – nearly 75,000 and counting – with young people between the ages of 18 and 29 leading the way.

People in Connecticut want to have a say. And they are watching how we conduct our business, run our campaigns, and raise the money to do it.”